

Good Afternoon Madame Chairwomen, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kimberly Marino and I am a resident of East Hampton and the Program Manager of the Nurturing Families Network Program at the Community Health Center in Meriden. I am here today to urge you to vote no to the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan.

Under this plan the Nurturing Families Program Funded by the Department of Social Services-Children's Trust Fund would be reduced by 30%, which will reduce staff and services provided to families. The Nurturing Families Program (NFN) provides education and support for new parents, intensive home visiting services for new parents identified as most at risk and group support. Home visitor's become involved during the mother's pregnancy and continue to work with the family until the child turns 5. NFN teaches appropriate expectations and understanding of child development and fosters strategies for enhancing the well being of children. NFN uses a nationally recognized curriculum; Parents as Teachers.

- Since the beginning of the NFN program in 1995, a total of 6,445 families have received home visiting services.
- NFN staff has screened 42, 827 first time families since 1999.
- Employment rates increase significantly during participation in the NFN program, as do education levels.
- Annual rates of abuse and neglect for NFN families have ranged from 1% to 6%, well below the 20-25% we see in other high-risk populations.

NFN is unique in that it is designed to engage families before a crisis occurs and to prevent abuse and neglect from happening. Our mission is to work in partnership with parents, helping them by educating and supporting them to face the very difficult job of learning how to become a parent.

NFN reaches more than 4,000 first time families each year and provides services to approximately 1,500 vulnerable families at risk of abusing, neglecting or abandoning their children. The immunization rate for two-year olds in the NFN program is 93% compared to 66% for two year olds with similar demographic background on Medicaid. A significant percentage of parents complete high school, become employed and move out of financial hardship due to the support of the NFN program. The NFN program is cost effective, \$3,000 per year for intensive home visiting, compared to \$30,000 per year for each substantiated DCF case and over \$44,000 per year for each inmate in Connecticut's correctional system.

As families continue to struggle with hard economic times, programs that help families such as the NFN program will be needed more not less. Please protect Connecticut's children and vote no to the Governor's Plan.

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